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## Governor Barbour Proposes Increase in Education Funding

MAEP, Teacher Pay, High School Redesign, Early Childhood Education,  
Physical Activity On Agenda

JACKSON, Mississippi – Governor Haley Barbour today proposed an overall 7 percent increase in funding for public education in fiscal year 2008, a comprehensive plan illustrating education remains the number one priority of state government.

The Governor's education budget, detailed to members of the Mississippi School Boards Association attending a conference here, proposed a \$65 million increase for the Mississippi Adequate Education Program along the lines of a phase-in funding plan passed by the Legislature in the 2006 legislative session. Other elements of the Governor's plan include a 3 percent teacher pay raise, full funding for high growth school districts, doubling funding for classroom supplies, support for early childhood education, daily physical activity and funding requested by State Superintendent Hank Bounds to redesign high schools.

"Education is the number one economic development issue and the number one quality of life issue in our state," Governor Barbour said. "It is rightly the number one priority of state government.

"With the increase I am proposing for our K-12 public schools, state support for K-12 will have increased by more than \$480 million during my Administration, an increase of more than 24 percent," Governor Barbour said. "This would be the largest increase in state spending for our K-12 public schools during any four year term of a Mississippi Governor."

Governor Barbour said his budget recommendation would increase funding for K-12 public schools by more than the \$158 million the State Board of Education has requested for the MAEP formula, but it would be a mistake for all of that increase to go to the MAEP formula.

By following the bipartisan phase-in plan, Governor Barbour said the state can afford and his budget will provide a 3 percent across-the-board pay raise for public school teachers, bringing the average salary for a public school teacher in Mississippi to nearly \$43,000 a year. This school year, teachers are making an average of 30 percent more than they were six years ago, after two consecutive 8 percent increases during his Administration.

This school year, per student spending in Mississippi's public schools from federal, state, and local sources is estimated to be between \$7,600 and \$7,800, Governor Barbour said,

noting that since he took office state support for K-12 school districts through the Mississippi Adequate Education Program has increased \$323 million, or 19 percent.

As he has done every year since becoming Governor, he said he will support full funding of the high-growth formula to help those school districts that are growing at an exceptionally fast rate.

“In the current school year, after two years of trying, we are only partially funding the high-growth component of the MAEP formula for the first time. My budget will include the \$19 million that is needed to fully fund the high growth school districts,” Governor Barbour said.

In addition, the budget will support classroom teachers by more than doubling the amount of funding for classroom supplies, funding the full request for the National Board Certified Teacher program, and setting aside \$2 million to pay more to experienced middle school teachers who serve as mentors to new teachers.

To help address the state’s 40 percent dropout rate, Governor Barbour said he will include funding requested by State Superintendent Hank Bounds to redesign high schools, and an extra \$500,000 for the Jobs for Mississippi graduates program to pilot the program in 10 middle schools.

To help kids be ready to learn when they begin school, the Governor said his budget will include \$5 million for early childhood development initiatives. “Since 80 percent of our four year olds are already being served by child care centers, Head Start, or pre-kindergarten, we should improve the infrastructure which is already in place by including more educational content,” he said.

Governor Barbour said the education items will be included in a balanced budget he will submit to the Legislature in mid-November that “will put our state on solid financial footing with a growing rainy day fund after being in a \$720 million budget hole just three years ago.

“The steps we have taken in the last two and a half years and the steps we will take in the upcoming legislative session will improve the results we get in the classroom for years to come,” he said. “After all, that is how any politician’s commitment to education should be judged, not by the amount of money he’s willing to spend. Even though under my Administration K-12 spending will increase at a record rate, the test is what are the results that politician demands and gets for our children.”

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